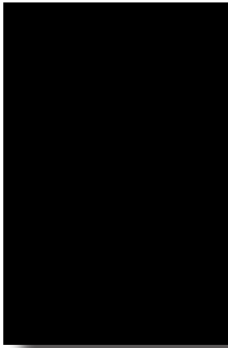




Michele's Column: Two Games Left!

by Michele Eginoire, NRCS National Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator



Michele Eginoire

Baseball season is ending and football season is underway. The end of the summer sees golfers golfing, tennis players playing and kids of all ages are engaged in sports. Winter is coming and everyone is engaged in activity to get one more round, set, or game in before the end of the year.

It's the same with Earth Team. We are nearing the end of the fiscal year and we have two items which require attention. We need volunteer supervisors and coordinators to enter hours into the Volunteer Tracking System to properly record our accomplishments and we need our exceptional Earth Team people and teams recommended for awards.

The deadline for entering hours into the tracking system is October 15. The deadline for nominating award winners is October 31, 2010.

Time is short for completing both tasks and, yet, properly completing both tasks is very important. Volunteers and their hours need to be properly credited in the tracking system to give your efforts, and those of your volunteers, the recognition they deserve. Exceptional individuals, groups, districts, RC&Ds and states deserve recognition for their successes and will serve as inspiration and encouragement for the rest of us.

Please get your nominations and hours in. Your input is critical. And, think of them as the last two rounds of play you need to complete before the year ends on all of us.

This is the last issue of the VolunteerVoice. As we announced in August, this newsletter's name is changing. State Earth Team volunteer coordinators made their suggestions and I am pleased to announce Jonnie Eyler, of Reno, Nev., sent the winning entry: Earth Team Connection. In December, look for your first issue of:

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The recent gulf oil spill means potential disaster for millions of migrating birds. Earth Team Volunteer Aaron Schulz is trying to save as many of these birds as possible by working with local NRCS conservationists on the Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (MBHI).

Schulz has been volunteering with the NRCS office in Butler County, Mo., since 2008, when he was a student at Poplar Bluff High School. But his regular assistance as part of a survey team changed earlier this year when NRCS announced the special initiative. MBHI is designed to provide increased shallow-water habitat in eight states for migratory birds heading towards uncertain conditions along the Gulf coast as a result of a major oil spill.

“The first week of MBHI sign up farmers signed up more than 27,000 acres,” says Heath Robertson, NRCS district conservationist. “We needed maps with accurate acres on them we could show farmers so they could show us which of their acres could be

included in the MBHI. The maps are being created by the NRCS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The maps will show the location of the oil spill and the location of the MBHI. The maps will also show the location of the oil spill and the location of the MBHI. The maps will also show the location of the oil spill and the location of the MBHI.

Recently the National Earth Team office asked the state Earth Team coordinators to tell us about their state's People's Gardens and the Earth Team volunteers that staff them. Four state coordinators responded. Here are their stories:

the People's Garden to the "Daily Bread" kitchen at a local church. The donated vegetables helped the church prepare free meals for hungry people.

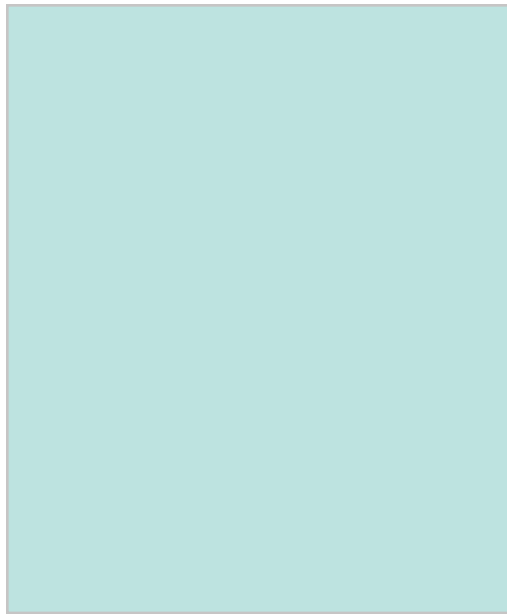
Jennifer Hesselgesser, People's Garden coordinator, helps manage
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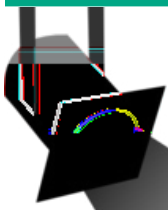
Joanna Pope, says the **Columbus, Neb., Community Garden** is a People's Garden project which is nominated for the "Top Project Award" given by the Nebraska RC&D State Association. The local garden allows 27 gardeners and their families to grow, enjoy or donate their own locally produced vegetables.

The participating gardeners represent a cross section of Columbus community members, organizations and cultures. Organizers say the participants are able to become better acquainted, network and socialize as they garden.

The project's dollar value benefit to the community is estimated at \$52,582.

Jonnie Eyler, says the **Basin Plant Materials Center** in Fallon, Nev., donated sweet corn, summer squash, radishes, and peppers from





Volunteer Spotlight

Kansas



The 25th Anniversary Celebration of the USDA-NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Program for the Kansas State Office was held with 23 of 51 volunteers in attendance. Also in attendance were 20 NRCS Kansas employees. Back row (L to R): Mary McBride, Bette Timmel, Joyce Wilhelm, Darrell Martin, Chris Flores, Mary Ann Tanking, Adria Smith, Paula Blume, Ronald Lull, John Ourada, Susan Serio, Esther Wolfe, Barbara Hays. Front row: Emily Hoyt, Marla Schlepp, Marlene Hansmann, Deanne Lull, Jeanette Bergeson, David Hays.

Submitted by: Jan Klaus, Kansas State Volunteer Coordinator

Hawaii

14-year-old Earth Team volunteer Keakealani Iona-Duncan is a student at Kanu O Ka Aina School in Waimea, Hawaii. District Conservationist Matthew Wung salutes Kea saying she put in over 150 hours of volunteer time helping with the Farm Bill workload, contract approval letters, forestry data entry, scanning and organizing application and payment documents at the Waimea field office. When asked what she liked about being an Earth Team volunteer, Kea said, "Everything."

Submitted by Jolene Lau, Hawaii State Volunteer Coordinator

California



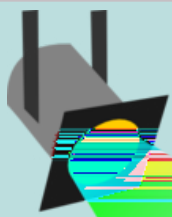
Organizers say Earth Team volunteers and NRCS staff members were key to the success of the international 2010 Canon Envirothon held in Arlington, Calif., in August. More than 270 teenagers from 45 U.S. states and nine Canadian provinces studied environmental issues and resource conservation, while

competing for a share of more than \$125,000 in scholarships and Canon products.

Assisting were Earth Team volunteers and NRCS staff members (L to R), first row: Christian Durham, Carol Rush, Toney Hillman, Chu Yang, Amy Rocha, Pam Hertzler, Peter Fahnestock, Whit Haraguchi, Jennifer

Foster, Elizabeth Palmer. Back row (L to R): Karl Kraft, Brandon Bates, Richard Rivas, and Aidan Fahnestock.

Submitted by Sharon J. Boyce, USDA NRCS/California Envirothon



Volunteer Spotlight

Wisconsin

Hunter Mathews (L) and Jesse Adsit are high school students who work as Earth Team Volunteers at the Richland Center, Wis., USDA Service Center. This past summer they helped NRCS staff organize older slides into their correct section, town and range.

In late August they were able to get out of the office and assist Soil Conservation Technician Todd Cockroft with a site inspection.

Afterwards, they helped pick some sweet corn to prepare for the annual office corn boil.

Submitted by Rachel Geiselman and Debra Potts.

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

California

Brooke Knisley, a soil conservation technician in Bagley, Minn., visits District Conservationist Rich Casale in his Capitola, Calif., office. Knisley is a former University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) student intern and Earth Team volunteer.

Casale says being an Earth Team volunteer can lead to a great job. "In the last 3 years alone," he said, "Nine of our UCSC Earth Team interns have graduated and entered the work force in environmental and agricultural related fields."

In the Capitola office, Casale says UCSC students learn about local natural resource issues, ecological and watershed management principals, and the use of conservation practices on farms, ranches, and other private lands. Some student volunteers, he points out, get college course credit for their work while others see their experience as an "inside track" to job opportunities with NRCS or other agencies and organizations. *Submitted by Rich Casale, District Conservationist.*

Colorado

Earth Team Volunteer Joel King is considered twice a hero by his office mates in La Junta, Colo. They honor him for serving multiple tours as a Marine in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and for his volunteer service in their NRCS office. *Joel King*

Colleen McCleary, Colorado state volunteer coordinator, says King is a hard worker. "He steps in and does what's needed. From clerical and office work to tending our outdoor garden, he is a great asset to our team," said Colleen. "We are very privileged to have Joel volunteering for us and he does a super job. He is a true Colorado-American hero!"

Shyla Renee Valencia, of La Junta, Colo., is a cosmetologist who has discovered the fun of being an Earth Team volunteer. The 21 year old says *Shyla Renee Valencia* she has been able to meet many new, pleasant people and that she enjoys being an Earth Team volunteer and hopes to be one for many years to come.

When asked about her future plans Shyla said, "After working as an Earth Team volunteer, I realize this job is something I am interested in. I can see myself doing office work with the NRCS." *Submitted by Colleen McCleary, Colorado State Volunteer Coordinator.*

Finally Old Enough to Be an Earth Team Volunteer

Submitted by Jenna Brazil, California Area 1 Earth Team Coordinator

Makayla Salès likes to help her mother. Now that she is 14, Makayla can help her as an Earth Team volunteer.

Makayla's mother is Melinda Graves, a soil conservationist in the Redding, Calif., field office. Now that she is old enough to be a member of Earth Team, Makayla says she can better help her mother with administrative, outreach, and field support activities.

"Volunteering makes me feel like I am helping

people learn about and care for the Earth," said Makayla. "I want to teach people about pollution and how it affects the Earth."

Melinda likes having her daughter on the Earth Team. She said, "Makayla often talks about going to college to become an environmentalist. I can't think of a better way for her to gain environmental experience than through the Earth Team."



Makayla Salès, (R) Earth Team volunteer, assists NRCS client Clark Davis with collecting soil samples from an irrigated pasture to obtain fertilization recommendations.

Blue Jackets and Gold Standards – The Earth Team and FFA

by Deb Potts, Wisconsin State Volunteer Coordinator

The NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Program exhibit attracted many students at the Life/Work Expo held in Madison, Wis., June 16, 2010. The expo is a career fair held in conjunction with the annual state FFA convention. More than 3,100 students attended.

FFA recognizes the importance of building leadership skills, citizenship, cooperation and community service. They help their members prepare for careers and leadership roles in agriculture which is one of the reasons NRCS participates in this special event.

The Earth Team display added to the career fair by providing information about NRCS careers and showing FFA members how they can gain valuable work experience by volunteering for the agency through Earth Team.

Ty Larson, assistant state conservationist - field operations, Debbie Potts, area administrative coordinator and Barb Jansen, visual information specialist, organized and staffed the exhibit.



Debbie Potts (L) and Ty Larson (R) are pictured with FFA members at the 2010 Life/Work Expo held this summer in Madison, Wis.

“Earth Team Volunteers Help Stop Disappearing Farmland”

By Alena Warren: Program Staff Intern/SCA Intern, Durham, N.H.

It's a fact of farming—when creek or riverbanks erode farmland disappears. It's also a fact—farming right up to a river will likely speed up bank sloughing and soil erosion.

So, how is stream bank erosion stopped? In the case of a New Hampshire farmer it takes a good conservation plan, an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract and the help of many Earth Team volunteers planting a riparian buffer.

A few years ago a parcel of land adjacent to the Saco River in Conway, N.H., was a corn field with a massive erosion problem. The parcel's new owner turned to her local NRCS office for help. NRCS conservationists developed a plan to meet her goals which included planting a riparian buffer to minimize soil erosion and help stabilize the riverbank.

Over two days in late spring 2010, Earth Team volunteers from the Pequawket Valley Alternative School, Fryeburg, Maine, turned that paper conservation plan into reality by helping plant 6,000 trees and shrubs.

The landowner's riverbank buffer now consists of 450 feet of trees along the river that are well-suited for the sandy soils and periodic flooding, another 25 feet of shrubs and 25 feet of flowering plants. In addition to minimizing erosion, experts say the buffer planting is also providing food for wildlife in the form of nuts, berries, nectar and pollen.

Conservationists and the

landowner are pleased with the result. They say keeping this site beautiful and open to the public is important. There are walking trails to a small sandy beach area which will provide a place for recreation and environmental education to the community and, they add, the buffer is home to unique bird species including bobolink, northern harrier and eastern meadowlark.



Earth Team volunteers from the Pequawket Valley Alternative School, Fryeburg, Maine, plant some of the 6,000 trees and

shrubs in a riparian buffer designed to stop soil loss and stream bank erosion in Conway, N.H.

Blog Features Stories on Earth Team Volunteers

USDA has a blog, or online web-log, to showcase stories about USDA people and programs. In the past half-year, five blogs have been posted to the USDA Blog webpage showcasing Earth Team activities to a worldwide audience. Jill Clothier, Iowa Earth Team coordinator, Allen Casey, Kansas soil conservationist, and Public Affairs Specialists Brad Fisher and Dick Tremain have all written blogs highlighting the work of Earth Team volunteers.

“It is important we recognize the work and accomplishments of Earth Team volunteers wherever

we can,” said Michele Eginoire, NRCS national Earth Team volunteer coordinator. “The USDA web-log is another great place to illustrate the effectiveness of the NRCS/Earth Team conservation partnership.”

All of the Earth Team blogs can be seen at: <http://blogs.usda.gov/?s=earth+team>.

State volunteer coordinators interested in blogging about their Earth Team volunteers should contact their state's public affairs specialist or Dick Tremain at 515-289-0325, extension 104, for more information.

Earth Team Volunteers Monitor Butterfly Migrations and Populations

By Allen Casey, Manhattan Plant Materials Center

The NRCS Manhattan, Kan., Plant Materials Center (PMC) held a North American Butterfly Association (NABA) butterfly count July 14, 2010. The NABA count was one of many counts across the North America where volunteers select a count area 15 miles in diameter and conduct a one-day census of all butterflies observed within that area.

There were 10 Earth Team volunteers that surveyed different habitats for butterflies and recorded all of the species of butterflies that they spotted and the number of each species. Some of the volunteers were relatively new to butterfly identification, but

they were armed with a checklist to fill out and most had various butterfly identification field guides.

This year volunteers identified at least 47 different species of butterflies.

Butterflies, while beautiful and fascinating, can also be used as an indicator of ecosystem health. The census is conducted to obtain scientific data for monitoring butterfly species and their population sizes over many years.

Details about the NABA butterfly count program and results from the 2010 surveys throughout North America can be found at the NABA website, www.naba.org.



Earth Team Volunteers (L to R) Vanessa Avara, Linda Williams and Sue Smith count butterflies in Kansas.

Teaching Conservation and Expanding the Numbers of Earth Team Volunteers

Submitted by Jenna Brazil, California Area 1 Earth Team Coordinator

Recently members of the Shasta County, Calif., Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) learned about the benefits of rangeland management as Earth Team volunteers. They helped Soil Conservationist Jenna Brazil and Soil Conservation Technician Carolyn Rourke of Weaverville perform line-point intercept transects to determine soil cover of a pasture.

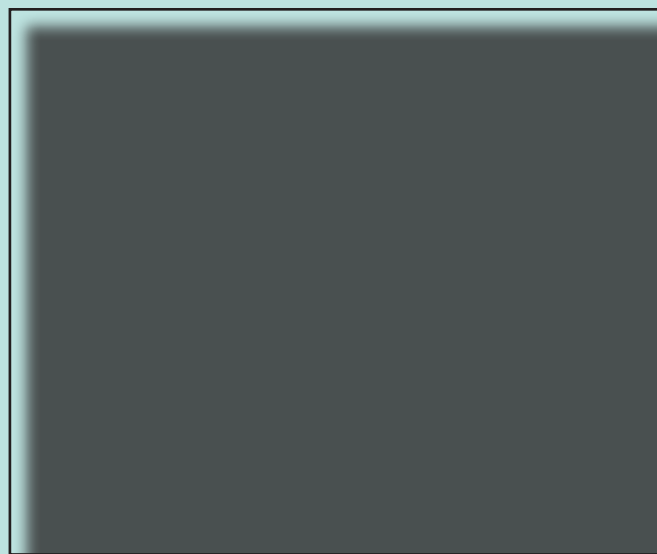
At the beginning of the day, YCC volunteers were asked if any had range management experience. No one raised their hand. At the end of the day, all 20 knew how to determine soil cover to forecast the site's resistance to soil degradation.

"The crew had a blast and we all learned a lot," Kevin Weller, YCC crew leader, said.

YCC members may work

on additional conservation projects, said Jenna Brazil, who is California NRCS' Area 1 Earth Team Coordinator. Brazil added, "What a wonderful way to expand NRCS conservation efforts!"

The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing young citizens by providing life and work skills, environmental education, GED



Carolyn Rourke (R), NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, supervises a team of youths in implementing a line-point intercept transect to determine soil cover.

training and employment for youth engaged in conservation projects.